

A Guide To Minding Your Mental Health

MIND SPACE

young people's
health matters

MAYO

Free and confidential support service
for young people aged 15 - 25 years old.



Who are Mindspace Mayo

Brief Summary

Mindspace Mayo is a free and confidential support service for young people's mental health and wellbeing. Mindspace's aim is to support young people aged 15-25 who are going through a difficult time to ensure they get the support they need.

Our centre in the Market Square, Castlebar provides a welcoming space for young people to call in, get information or have a chat one-to-one with a support worker. If a young person wants support, our staff are there to listen, without making judgements, and to provide supportive guidance.

Getting support can help you to keep on track at school, study or work, and in your personal and family relationships. The sooner you get help the sooner things can begin to improve for you.

We also provide information and advice to anyone who is worried about a friend or young person in their life.

MINDSPACE

How we support young people:

- Offer advice & support.
- Listen without making judgements.
- Help with decision making skills.
- Support (anxiety, stress, mood).
- Supported access to other services.

What we offer someone who supports a young person:

- Advice & guidance on how to support or refer the young person.
- Information & signposting.



Anxiety...

What is anxiety?

Anxiety is an uncomfortable feeling of fear or stress. It's quite a common feeling everyone experiences at some stage. But, if it persists, it can create problems. Anxiety is a condition that can affect anyone – it doesn't distinguish between age, background or social group. Even some of the most confident people you know may have suffered with anxiety. Anxiety is also a normal emotional response to stressful situations. What makes one person anxious, doesn't always cause the same response in others.

Some young people worry about exams and school, while others do not. Meeting new people is stressful for some, while others relish the opportunity.

While anxiety is an everyday feeling, it becomes a problem if it interferes with someone's normal day-to-day activities and persists for more than a couple of weeks. If this is happening to you or someone you care about, they may be experiencing an anxiety disorder. Anxiety disorders can make someone feel nervous a lot of the time, for long periods of time and in a lot of different situations. Anxiety can affect people's physical and mental health. It might be short lived, or stay for a long time.

What makes people feel anxious?

Many things can trigger anxiety, such as our environment, stressful situations like school exams, problems within the family, or a traumatic event.

Sometimes it's a combination of lots of different factors and the exact cause of the anxiety is not always clear.



Signs and symptoms of Anxiety

- Feeling worried/constantly feeling something bad will happen
- Feeling irritable, argumentative or frequently in a bad mood
- Asking unnecessary questions or requiring constant reassurance
- Getting upset with mistakes, or with a change of routine
- Perfectionism or difficulty concentrating
- Dry mouth or difficulty swallowing
- Difficulty getting to and staying asleep and/or nightmares
- Muscle tension and headaches
- Restlessness, trembling, shaking
- Rapid heart-rate and breathing
- Feeling sick: nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea.
- Palpitations
- Sweating
- Shaking or trembling
- Feeling shortness of breath or smothering
- Sensation of choking
- Chest pains or tightness
- Nausea or gastrointestinal problems
- Dizziness, light-headedness, headaches, or feeling faint
- Feeling hot or cold
- Numbness or tingling sensations
- Feeling detached from oneself or reality
- Fear of “going crazy” or losing control

Tips to Improve Your Anxiety Symptoms

1 Take a deep breath.

Try the following exercise, which you can repeat several times: Inhale slowly to a count of four, starting at your belly and then moving into your chest. Gently hold your breath for four counts. Then slowly exhale to four counts. Repeat until calm!

2 Get active.

One of the most important things you can do for your mental health is to get regular exercise. For instance, a brisk 30- to 60-minute walk can help reduce anxiety. Create a list of activities that you enjoy, and put them on your schedule for the week.

3 Sleep well.

Not getting enough sleep can trigger anxiety. If you're having trouble sleeping, try to engage in a relaxing activity before bedtime, such as taking a warm bath, listening to soothing music or taking several deep breaths.

4 Stay connected to others.

Talking with others can do a world of good. Another option is to get together and engage in an activity that improves your anxiety, such as taking a walk, sitting on the beach or going to a yoga class.

5 Avoid caffeine.

Caffeine is one of the substances that can exacerbate anxiety. Try to reduce your intake or cut it out altogether. You could try replacing it with water or herbal teas.

6 Avoid drugs and alcohol.

While drugs and alcohol might help to reduce anxiety in the short term, they often do just the opposite in the long term. Even the short-term effect can be harmful. If you are experiencing anxiety, it is important to reduce your alcohol and drug use so you can manage your symptoms more effectively.

7 Do something you enjoy.

Engaging in enjoyable activities helps to soothe your anxiety. For instance, you might take a walk, listen to music or read a book.

8 Take a break.

It's also helpful to build breaks into your day. This might be a change of pace or scenery, enjoying a hobby, or switching 'to-do' tasks. Mixing up the routine can be refreshing.

9 Contact a therapist.

The important thing to remember is that there is help available. Attending a service like Mindspace will help you understand your anxiety and cope with it more effectively.





SLEEP... Importance of Sleep.

Sleep is vital to our health and wellbeing. It helps restore energy, keep memory functioning properly, and helps to heal our bodies. When sleep is disrupted or deprived, we don't feel as alert, we are easily agitated and all of our actions seem slow. Stress and anxiety caused by work, family, and daily life commonly lead to sleeping problems. Hectic work schedules, school and personal lives leave little time to unwind and relax.

Sleep disorders cause more than just daytime sleepiness. They can take a serious toll on your mental and physical health, leading to memory problems, weight gain, and impacting your energy, and mood. But you don't have to live with a sleeping problem. There are many things you can do to get a good night's sleep and improve your health.

What cause sleep difficulties?

Sleeping problems or sleeplessness, difficulty sleeping or getting to sleep, is often referred to as insomnia. Often stress and anxiety can lead to sleeping problems. As the stressful situation passes, a more regular sleep pattern should return. Irregular sleep patterns can also be related to depression.

Factors that can disrupt sleep include:

- Asthma and breathing disorders.
- Stress and worry.
- Depression.
- Caffeine and drugs or alcohol
- some prescribed and over the counter drugs.
- Jet lag.

SLEEP HYGIENE...

Some Tips to help get a good night's sleep.

Implement a routine:

Try to go to bed and wake at the same time daily.

Limit the bed to sleeping: Try not to study, watch TV, read or eat in bed.

Exercise: Do some exercise during the day to make yourself tired.

Relax before bed: Have a warm bath, listen to soothing music, practice deep breathing techniques or try yoga.

Avoid naps

Napping during the day may limit your ability to sleep at night.

Minimise anxiety

Try not to tackle anything that may cause stress & anxiety just before bed time, or write down any worries you may have.

Avoid stimulants

Avoid having caffeine (coffee, tea, chocolate) or cigarettes before bed.

Warm and soothing drinks

Warm chamomile or peppermint tea or a milk-based drink may help you sleep.

Lavender

Lavender is considered a natural sedative, so sprinkling some oil on your pillow may help you drift off.

Sleep in a well-ventilated room, that's neither too hot nor cold

Avoid excessive exercise just before going to bed

Avoid eating a heavy meal late in the evening

If none of these help, consult your doctor.

Exam Stress

Preparing for exams and sitting exams can be very stressful.

The exam season can be a stressful time for both young people and their parents. It's common for young people to be irritable and maybe have trouble sleeping and eating during this time. It's also normal for parents to be anxious about how much their son or daughter is working and whether they'll get the results they need.

Parents can, however, play a key role in helping their son/daughter cope with exam stress. The best way to support your child during the stress of revision and exams is to make home life as calm and pleasant as possible. It helps if other members of the household are aware that the young person might be feeling pressure.

It can help if there are plenty of healthy snacks in the fridge. Eating good, nutritious food at regular intervals can really help deal with the demands of study. It is also very important to take regular breaks throughout the day. It's important to have a change of scene and get away from the books and computer for a while. Also taking regular exercise is vital at this time. A brisk walk around the block can help clear the mind before the next revision session.

If a young person does begin to feel overwhelmed by the study and exam stress, it can really help to talk to somebody about it- friends, parents and even teachers. Simply by talking about something can help you to get the right perspective. Try and get some relaxation and exercise in each day. One good solution to stress is to hear your own positive talk: reaffirm yourself by telling yourself that you are well able to cope and you are more than just some results of an exam.

Keep positive!!

Tips for Effective Study

1. Have a set place where you study and keep it free of distractions. This should, if possible, have a desk, comfortable chair and good lighting and heating when required.
2. Set Study Goals, Prioritize and schedule what you need to do – be realistic! Structure your study and make a study timetable.
3. Stay hydrated- drink plenty of water.
4. Schedule your “me” time (so it doesn’t eat up study time), make sure you do something you enjoy during this time.
5. Keep from dozing off: don’t read right before going to bed, and don’t read in bed.
6. Rewrite/re-read your notes; reorganize into categories.
7. Quiz yourself on what you have learned.
8. Use different study techniques- don't be afraid to try new things.
9. Use past exam papers. This will help you prepare for the exam and get a feel for what the paper will be like.
10. Don't leave it all till the last minute. Studying is like a marathon, you have to be in it for the long haul. Leaving everything to the last minute will leave you feeling overwhelmed.
11. Reward yourself- Study can be really difficult. Treat yourself after a productive study session.
12. Get enough sleep. Avoid staying up all night cramming before an exam as you'll need all your energy the next day and a lack of sleep will affect your concentration.

Talk to someone if you feel that your exam stress is getting out of hand and becoming unmanageable. Speak to a friend, teacher or lecturer- don't keep things bottled up.

Remember that it will all be worth it. When your motivation is low, visualise yourself succeeding and keep positive!



Minding your Mental Health

Tips for Keeping well!

1. Talk about your feelings

Talking about your feelings can help you stay in good mental health and deal with times when you feel troubled.

2. Keep active

Regular exercise can boost your self-esteem and can help you concentrate, sleep, and look and feel better. Exercise keeps your brain and your other vital organs healthy and can improve your mental health.

3. Eat well

Your brain needs a mix of nutrients in order to stay healthy and function well, just like the other organs in your body. A diet that's good for your physical health is also good for your mental health.

4. Drink sensibly

We often drink alcohol to change our mood. Some people drink to deal with negative feelings, but the effect is only temporary. When the drink wears off, you feel worse because of the way the alcohol has affected your brain and the rest of your body.

5. Keep in touch

There's nothing better than catching up with someone face to face, but that's not always possible. You can also give them a call, drop them a note, or chat to them online instead. Keep the lines of communication open: it's good for you!

6. Ask for help

None of us are superhuman. We all sometimes get tired or overwhelmed by how we feel or when things don't go to plan. If things are getting too much for you and you feel you can't cope, ask for help. Your family or friends may be able to offer practical help or a listening ear.

7. Take a break

A change of scene or a change of pace is good for your mental health. It could be a five-minute pause from cleaning your kitchen, a half-hour lunch break at work, or a weekend exploring somewhere new. A few minutes can be enough to de-stress you. Give yourself some 'me time'.

8. Do something you're good at

Enjoying yourself can help beat stress. Doing an activity you enjoy probably means you're good at it, and achieving something boosts your self-esteem.

9. Accept who you are

We're all different. It's much healthier to accept that you're unique than to wish you were more like someone else. Feeling good about yourself boosts your confidence to learn new skills, visit new places and make new friends. Good self-esteem helps you cope when life takes a difficult turn.

10. Care for others

Caring for others is often an important part of keeping up relationships with people close to you. It can even bring you closer together.

11. Keep a gratitude journal

Include 3 things you were grateful for and 3 things you were able to accomplish each day.

12. Eat Dark Chocolate!

Boost brainpower by treating yourself to a couple pieces of dark chocolate every few days. The nutrients in dark chocolate are thought to improve alertness and mental skills.

13. Go off the grid

Leave your smart phone at home for a day and disconnect from constant emails, alerts, and other interruptions. Spend time doing something fun with someone face-to-face.

14. Spend some time with a furry friend

Time with animals lowers the stress hormone - cortisol, and boosts oxytocin - which stimulates feelings of happiness. If you don't have a pet, hang out with a friend who does or volunteer at a shelter.

15. Practice forgiveness

Even if it's just forgiving that person who cut you off during your commute. People who forgive have better mental health and report being more satisfied with their lives.

16. Go for a walk

Take 30 minutes to go for a walk in nature - it could be a stroll through a park, or a hike in the woods. Research shows that being in nature can increase energy levels, reduce depression and boost well-being.

17. Get plenty of sunlight

Sunlight is a great source of vitamin D. Vitamin D is a really important vitamin for our bodies and our brains. It helps our brains to release chemicals which improve our mood, like endorphins and serotonin. Try to go out in the sun when you can, but make sure you keep your skin and eyes safe.

18. Surround yourself with good people

People with strong family or social connections are generally healthier than those who lack a support network. Make plans with supportive family members and friends, or seek out activities where you can meet new people, such as a club, class or support group.

19. Get help when you need it

Seeking help is a sign of strength — not a weakness. And it is important to remember that treatment is effective. One of the most important ways to keep yourself mentally healthy is to recognise when you're not feeling good, and to know when to ask for help. There's no shame in asking someone for support if you're feeling low or stressed. Everyone goes through patches where they don't feel as good as they should. You can try speaking to your friends or family, or contact Mindspace Mayo.

Exercise and Your Mental Health

What are the mental health benefits of exercise?

Exercise keeps your brain and your other vital organs healthy and can improve your mental health.

Exercise and Depression

Studies show that exercise can have a positive impact on mild to moderate depression. This is for a number of reasons. Exercise promotes all kinds of changes in the brain, including neural growth, reduced inflammation, and new activity patterns that promote feelings of calm and well-being. Also, exercise can serve as a distraction, allowing you to find some quiet time to break out of the cycle of negative thoughts that feed depression.

Exercise and Anxiety

Exercise is a natural and effective anti-anxiety treatment. It relieves tension and stress, boosts physical and mental energy, and enhances well-being through the release of endorphins. When you are being active, notice the sensation of your feet hitting the ground, for example, or the rhythm of your breathing, or the feeling of the wind on your skin. By focusing on your body and how it feels as you exercise, you may be able to interrupt the flow of constant worries running through your head.

Exercise and Stress

When you are experiencing stress, your muscles may feel tense, especially in your face, neck, and shoulders, leaving you with back or neck pain, or painful headaches. You may feel a tightness in your chest, a pounding pulse, or muscle cramps. Exercise is an effective way to deal with your stress. As well as releasing endorphins in the brain, physical activity helps to relax the muscles and relieve tension in the body. Since the body and mind are so closely linked, when your body feels better so, too, will your mind.

Exercise and Self Esteem

Regular exercise can have a powerful effect on your self-esteem. It can foster your sense of self-worth and make you feel strong and powerful. You'll feel better about your appearance and, by meeting small exercise goals, you'll feel a sense of achievement.

Tips for Getting Active

Overcoming barriers

There can be barriers to starting exercise. Some people report feeling a little anxious about starting a new activity. Also some people report barriers such as cost, injury or illness, lack of energy, fear of failure, or even the weather can stop them from getting started. There are ways to help deal with these issues and be successful in your new activity. Some helpful hints are below!

Make Time

With everyone's busy lives, it can be hard to find the time to exercise. You may need to rejig commitments to make room for extra activities, or choose something that fits into your busy schedule. Start by trying a short exercise, like a 10 minute walk and see if you can increase the time as you get into a routine!

Body Image

Body Image can act as a barrier to participating in physical activity. People who are anxious about how their body will look to others while they are exercising may avoid exercise as a result. For women, attending a female-only exercise class or a ladies-only swimming session may help to overcome this barrier. Sometimes exercising with a friend can help to reduce this anxiety.

Making it part of daily life

Exercise and activity can be a part of your life. There are many ways to increase your daily activity levels. Adopting a more active lifestyle can be as simple as doing daily tasks more energetically or making small changes to your routine, such as walking up a flight of stairs.

Start Slowly

If physical activity is new to you, it's best to build up your ability gradually. Focus on task goals, such as improving stamina, rather than competition, and keep a record of your activity and review it to provide feedback on your progress. There are many apps and social networks accessible for free to help.

At Work

Whether you're on your feet, sat at a desk or sat behind the wheel during your working hours, there are many ways you can get more active. Try using the stairs instead of the lift, walking or cycling a slightly longer route home, or using your lunch hour to take a brisk walk, do an exercise class or go for a swim. The change of scenery will do you good, too.



Nutrition

Ten Tips to eat well on a budget

Some people think that eating well costs a lot of money. However, eating well can be surprisingly cheap. Here are ten tips which may help you to eat well but cheaply.

1. Make a shopping list and plan your food budget every week.
2. Avoid ready meals and take-aways. They are often rich in fat and sugars and may not provide good value for money.
3. Avoid buying snacks such as crisps, ice creams and sweets apart from the occasional treat.
4. Shop seasonal fruits and vegetables. For instance, oranges and bananas are winter fruits whereas strawberries and peaches are summer fruits. Buying fruits and vegetables out of season can be expensive.
5. Buy fresh foods such as fruit, vegetables and meats in small amounts and more often since they go off easily.
6. Avoid canned foods if possible. For instance dried beans and pasta are less expensive than canned beans and processed pasta.
7. Avoid sugar-sweetened fizzy drinks and fruit juices. They are often quite expensive. Use water and eat fruit instead.
8. Compare prices in local shops and supermarkets and take advantage of special offers.
9. Use supermarket own brands instead of classic brands. They often contain the same ingredients but are cheaper.
10. Cook and eat together with others and share the cost.

If you're going through a tough time...

Mindspace can help.

There is **no issue too small** to see us about.

Mindspace can help if you:

- Are feeling down, stressed or can't stop worrying.
- Don't feel like yourself anymore.
- Can't deal with school/college/work or are finding it difficult to concentrate.
- Are feeling sick or worried about your health.
- Have questions about, or want to cut down on alcohol or other drug use.
- Want to talk about sexuality, gender identity or relationships.
- Are having difficulties with your family or friends.
- Have sexual health issues.
- Are being bullied, hurt or harassed.
- Are worried about work or study or if you're having money trouble.
- Need someone to talk to.

Getting support can help you to keep on track at school, study or work, and in your personal and family relationships. The sooner you get help the sooner things can begin to improve for you.

How to make a referral. To book an appointment at Mindspace:

Call: 094 906 7001 Email: info@mindspacemayo.ie

Text: 086 1844995

Or go to our website to book an appointment!

www.mindspacemayo.ie

MindSpace Mayo is not a 24 hour emergency or crisis intervention service.

Our phone, text and email services are NOT checked outside of office hours.

If you need help outside of these hours please see below a list of support services:

24 hour services

Phone

Emergency Services

999 or 112

Samaritans

116 123

Listening service for people who are lonely, despairing and suicidal.

Childline

1800 666 666

A confidential phone line for children and young people.

Pieta House

1800 247 247

Suicide prevention Helpline, for anyone in a suicidal crisis or who has been bereaved by suicide.

 facebook.com/mayomindspace

 twitter.com/mindspacemayo

MINDSPACE MAYO

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